DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 185 197 UD 020 466

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TITLE An Exploratory Examination of Teachers' Perceptions of Pupils' Race.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Boston, MA, April, 1980)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Blacks; Hispanic Americans; *Race; *Racial Attitudes; Racial Bias; *Racial Identification; *Teacher Attitudes; Teachers; Whites
IDENTIFIERS *Self Social Symbols Tasks

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore on a preliminary basis teachers' perceptions and prejudices with regard to pupils' race. Individual interviews with 96 teachers included their labeling and sorting of pupil photographs. The left-to-right valence framework of the Self-Social Symbols Tasks was utilized as an unobtrusive measure of prejudice. The mean number of races identified by the teachers was 3.73. The most frequent basis for their designations of race was color. White pupils tended to be accorded the most positive and Puerto Rican the most negative position. Tables of data are included. (Author/MK)

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AN EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF PUPILS' RACE

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Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, April 1980

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The designations and evaluations of race are far from free of controversy in scientific discussions and studies as well as in popular parlance and practice. Although leading social scientists assert that there is no such thing as race, prevailing practice in the education profession reveals race and related terms, like racial prejudice (Allport, 1954) and ethnic stereotyping (Brigham, 1972), to be significant concepts. Race-related research, such as attempts to measure ethnic attitudes, has been rather extensive if not altogether effective.

Research has revealed that teachers' racial perceptions significantly affect their reading diagnosis (Kingdon, 1971), behavioral expectations (Clifford, 1973; Long & Henderson, 1971), and special education placements (Lanier, 1975). Yet, measurement of teachers' perceptions and of their evaluation of race is still in an embryonic and imprecise state. More exploration and investigation is needed, especially with regard to instrumentation.

The instruments used to measure ethnic attitudes may be divided into verbal and nonverbal types. Prominent among the earliest verbal instruments was the Bogardus (1925) social distance scale. The social distance scale is designed to elicit responses on a situation-specific continuum ranging from ready acceptance (e.g., "would marry") toward strong rejection (e.g., "would exclude from my country"). Administering the social distance scale to 1,725 native-born Americans, Bogardus (1925) found the highest degree of resistance toward Hindus, Mulattoes, Chinese, Turks, and Negroes. Variations of the Bogardus technique have been employed with adult subjects (e.g., Landis, Datwyler and Dorn, 1966; Triandis and Triandis, 1962), college students (e.g., Fagan and O'Neill, 1965; Newcomb, 1950; Proenza and Strickland, 1965), and adolescent students (e.g., Miller and Biggs, 1958; Zeligs, 1948).

A second verbal technique for the assessment of ethnic and cultural attitudes is the semantic differential. Designed by Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum (1957), this scale is comprised of pairs of bipolar adjectives frequently arrayed on a seven-point scale. The semantic differential has been used extensively with college students (e.g., Chen, 1978; Derbyshire, 1966; Jenkins, Russell, and Suci, 1958; Williams, 1964, 1969; Williams et al., 1973). Rosen (1959), however, detected its limitations among elementary students.

A third verbal instrument, the situational attitude scale (Sedlacek, Brooks, and Chaples, 1971), incorporates elements of both the semantic differential and social distance scale. This instrument use has been largely limited to the college level (e.g., Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972; Sedlacek, Brooks, and Mindus, 1973).

In order to accommodate the less developed verbal abilities of younger subjects, some researchers have employed nonverbal instruments. The stimuli of such instruments include drawings, cut-out figures, dolls, and photographs. Drawings have been used to assess not only self-esteem (e.g., Coles, 1967; Dennis, 1966; Eisner, 1967; Goldman and Mercer, 1976), but also racial preferences (e.g., Kircher and Furby, 1971) among young children of various ethnic backgrounds. Moveable cut-out figures were used in sociometric studies of black and white elementary school children by Koslin, Amarel, and Amer (1969) and by Koslin and Pargamant (1972).

The Self-Social Constructs Tasks (Long, Henderson, and Ziller, 1970) uses both representational figures and abstract drawings in an effort to be a more unobtrusive measure. This instrument has been used rather extensively with adults (e.g., Ziller, Megas, and DeCencio, 1964; Ziller and Grossman, 1964), college students (Ridgeway, 1964), with adolescents (e.g., Fry, 1976; Long, et al., 1970; Long, Ziller, and Bankes, 1971; Zirkel and Gable, 1977),

and elementary school students (e.g., Long, Henderson, and Ziller, 1967); Howard, Stainback, and Stainback, 1972; Long and Henderson, 1971).

Another nonverbal instrument which has been used by numerous researchers in a variety of settings is the Clark and Clark (1958) dolls technique to determine racial preferences of young children (e.g., Ammons, 1950; Hraba and Grant, 1970; Kline, 1970).

A final nonverbal technique to elicit racial perceptions has been the use of photographs. This technique has been utilized in a variety of settings with adults (e.g., Green, 1967; Secord, Bevan, and Katz, 1956), school children (e.g., Davison, 1975; Katz, Johnson, and Parker, 1970; Taylor, 1966), and preschool subjects (e.g., Horowitz, 1939; Horowitz and Horowitz, 1938; Morland, 1958).

Despite the breadth of race-related instrumentation and terminology (e.g., race, ethnicity, culture), there has been negligible reported research on teacher perceptions of pupils' race. In order to optimize realism and unobtrusiveness, color photographs and abstract drawings were used as the stimuli and instrumentation, respectively, for the present study. These particular uses in combination are novel and thus only exploratory.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to explore on a preliminary basis teacher perceptions and prejudices with regard to race. Specific questions for investigation included:

1. What is the total and mean number of races perceived by teachers?
2. What labels do teachers typically use to designate their perceived classifications of race with regard to pupils' photographs?
3. How do teachers' racial perceptions of pupils' photographs compare with the school records' racial identification of these pupils?

4. Do teachers tend to classify certain racial groups, as identified by their perceptions of pupil photographs, at the negative or positive ends of an unobtrusive scale? If so, which groups?

5. Do teachers tend to classify certain racial groups, as identified by a subsequent review of the school records of the photographed pupils, at the negative or positive positions of an unobtrusive scale? If so, which ones?

6. Are the following teacher variables significantly related to the number, labels, and valence (i.e., positive or negative position) of their racial stereotypes: ethnicity, sex, age, level of education, and years of experience.

METHOD

Subjects

The sample was comprised of 96 teachers who were enrolled in graduate courses at a university in Central Connecticut. In terms of university records, their ethnicity was White - 42, Black - 22, Puerto Rican - 28, and other-Hispanic - 4; and their sex was male - 36, and female - 60. Their ages ranged from 19 to 66, with a mean age of 30.28 years (sd = 10.25). Their level of experience ranged from 1 to 35 years, with a mean of 5 years 8 months (sd = 6.34).

Instruments

Pictorial stimuli were used in the form of 100 color photographs of elementary school children in Connecticut identified as follows by their school records: 27 White (14 M and 13 F), 36 Black (18 M and 18 F), 37 Hispanic (19 M and 18 F). The schematic structure of the self-esteem task (ST) of Long, Henderson, and Ziller's (1970) self-social constructs was used as a measure of prejudice. The ST consists of an array of five blank circles arranged in a horizontal continuum. Valences are attributed to the positions from left (most positive = 1) to right (most negative = 5). In other types of studies (see pp. 2-3 supra), relatively extensive evidence was presented for the reliability and validity of the ST's positional framework.

Procedure

Each teacher was interviewed for the purpose of collecting pertinent demographic data (e.g., age, years of teaching experience, and level of formal education). During these interviews, the teachers were not forewarned about the purpose of the study. After collecting these data, the interviewer -- a female graduate student who served as the research assistant for the study -- presented each subject with the 100 photographs and the following instructions for what hereinafter is referred to as the "piles position task":

> This is a group of elementary school children from Connecticut schools. We would like you to divide them into piles according to "race." Use as many piles as you wish, depending upon how you perceive "race." Arrange your piles in a straight line. Please indicate a brief (one or two word) label for each pile; adding any descriptive comments if you'd like.

One of the piles was randomly selected by the investigator, based on a rotating order. The subject was then presented with the pile and the ST circles. The following instructions were given for what hereinafter is referred to as the "circles position task":

> These five circles are to represent children. As I show you the picture of each child in this pile, please point to the circle that you think represents the child.

Statistical Analysis

Several statistical procedures were applied to the data to respond to the stated objectives of the study. Descriptive statistics and direct content analysis procedures were used to determine the number of races and types of labels perceived by the teachers. In addition, analysis of variance procedures were applied to the number-of-races data to test the null hypothesis of no differences among teacher and student ethnic groups at the .05 level of significance.

A chi-square analysis was conducted at the .05 level of significance to determine the relationship between teacher racial perceptions and school record racial identification. A contingency coefficient was also computed as a measure of the strength of the relationship.

Two-way analysis of variance procedures (3 x 3) were applied to the classification position and self-esteem task data to test the null hypothesis of no differences with respect to teacher ethnicity and student ethnicity. These analyses were conducted at the .05 level of significance.

Pearson product-moment and point-biserial correlation coefficients were computed as appropriate to determine the relationship between selected teacher variables (gender, age, level of education, experience) and classification strategies (number of positions, mean position for major groups). The level of significance was set at .05.

Results

The teachers in this study listed a total of 43 races. The mean number of races was 3.73 with a standard deviation of 1.64. Further analysis of these data, with respect to teacher ethnicity, is reported on pp. 11-12 infra.

The labels most frequently used to designate race were "white," "black," "mixed," "oriental," and "Puerto Rican." In addition to designation based on color, the bases of other distinctions in order of frequency, were nationality (e.g., Swede), language (e.g., Spanish-speaking), religion (e.g., Hindu), and location (e.g., northern European). The optional descriptional comments were markedly ambiguous for the Puerto Rican designation, being based variously on color, nationality, and language.

The relationship between the teachers' racial perceptions and the school records' racial identification appears in Table I. The relationship was found to be significant ($\chi^2 = 8623$, df = 6, $p < .01$). The contingency coefficient was moderate (C = .69). In 5869 of the 9501 comparisons (or 62%), the perceived teacher label matched the school record identification. It is interesting to note, however, that the levels of agreement for white and black students (per school identification) were 73% (1800 of 2473) and 92% (3159 of 3437), respectively, but the level of agreement for Hispanic students was only 25% (910 of 3591). The Hispanic students were perceived as white (37%) or a designation other than white, black, or Hispanic (32%) to a high degree.

The means and analysis of variance results for the piles-position task appear in Table II. Student ethnicity was found to be a significant factor at the .05 level. The students perceived as Hispanic (e.g., Spanish speaking, Puerto Rican) across the total group of teachers were accorded a significantly more negative mean valence than students perceived as white or black.

Table III contains the means and analysis of variance results for the unobtrusive circles-position task. Student ethnicity and teacher ethnicity were both found to be significant factors at the .01 level. The interaction between these two factors was also significant at the .01 level. As revealed in this table, black and Hispanic students were accorded equally negative valence positions relative to white students across the three teacher groups. Across the student groups, Hispanic teachers tended to provide more negative unobtrusive ratings than white and black teachers. The interaction efforts between teacher ethnicity and student ethnicity revealed that white and black teachers tended to accord similar valences for white and black students, placing white students in a relatively positive position and black students in

TABLE I

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER RACIAL PERCEPTION AND SCHOOL RECORD RACIAL IDENTIFICATION

		School Record Identification		
		White	Black	Hispanic
Teacher Racial Perceptions	White	1800	23	1344
	Black	57	3159	170
	Hispanic	186	32	910
	Other	430	223	1167
		2473	3437	3591

$\chi^2 = 8623.$

df = 6

$p < .01$

C = .69

TABLE II

MEANS AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR
UNOBTRUSIVE PILES POSITION TASK

Means+

Teacher Ethnicity	Student Ethnicity (Perceived)			
	White	Black	Hispanic	Composite
White	2.11	2.00	3.06	2.25
Black	1.90	1.47	2.58	1.90
Hispanic	2.03	2.23	2.00	2.12
Composite	2.03	1.97	2.68	2.12

Analysis of Variance

Source	df	SS	MS	F-ratio
Teacher Ethnicity	2	3.93	1.97	1.66
Student Ethnicity	2	14.82	7.41	6.24*
Interaction	4	9.73	2.43	2.05
Error	204	242.34	1.19	
Total	212	270.82		

+Valence values range from 1 (most positive) to 5 (most negative)

*$p < .05$

TABLE III

MEANS AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR
UNOBTRUSIVE CIRCLES TASK

Means

Teacher Ethnicity	Student Ethnicity (School Record)			
	White	Black	Hispanic	Composite
White	2.89	3.45	3.00	3.09
Black	2.46	3.30	3.43	3.03
Hispanic	3.43	3.23	3.65	3.43
Composite	2.93	3.32	3.32	3.21

Analysis of Variance

Source	df	SS	MS	F-ratio
Teacher Ethnicity	2	85.84	42.92	25.81**
Student Ethnicity	2	84.69	42.34	25.46**
Interaction	4	131.28	32.82	19.74**
Error	2845	4730.94	1.66	
Total	2853	5032.75		

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

a relatively negative position. Hispanic teachers tended to demonstrate the reverse orientation with regard to white and black students' photographs. Moreover, Hispanic teachers place the Hispanic students in the most negative relevant position while the white teachers accorded the Hispanic students a relatively positive position.

Table IV contains the means and analysis of variance results for the number of racial designated piles. As may be seen by viewing this table, the white teachers and black teachers tended to create more classifications than the Hispanic teachers, but the differences were not significant at the .05 level.

The point-biserial correlations for teacher gender and the product moment correlations for teacher age, experience, and educational level with the number of student racial designations and with the ordinal position for each of the three major designations (white, black, Hispanic) are presented in Table V. The correlations were generally low and ranged from -.25 to .20. None were found to be significant at the .05 level.

While teacher ethnicity was not significantly related to the number of racial labels, it did seem to be somewhat systematically related to the type of labels that teachers designated. Beyond the frequent and similarly distributed labels of white, black, mixed, oriental, and Puerto Rican, other labels identified by white and black teachers were largely associated with nationality and ethnicity (e.g., Afro-American, Asian, Puerto Rican), with white teachers exhibiting more variety in this area than black teachers. In contrast, hispanic teachers tended to employ specific intermediate labels (e.g., "mestizo," "trigueño," "mulato") based on detailed physiognomic characteristics.

TABLE IV

MEANS AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR
NUMBER OF RACIAL CLASSIFICATIONS

Means

Teacher Ethnicity	N	Number of Piles
White	41	3.93
Black	20	3.95
Hispanic	35	3.37

Analysis of Variance

Source	df	SS	MS	F-ratio
Teacher Ethnicity	2	7.06	3.53	1.32
Error	93	247.90	2.67	
Total	95	254.96		

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

TABLE V

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN OTHER TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS AND CLASSIFICATION POSITIONS

Teacher Characteristic	Number of Classifications n	r	White Position n	r	Black Position n	r	Hispanic Position n	r
Gender	96	-.13	86	-.05	89	.20	38	.15
Age	96	-.14	86	-.14	89	.00	38	.01
Experience	96	-.18	86	-.16	89	-.04	38	.01
Educational Level	96	-.10	86	-.05	89	.14	38	-.25

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

DISCUSSION

In this study, teachers identified a total of 43 student racial designations. The mean number of 3.73 races was not unexpected but the standard deviation of 1.64 revealed a somewhat surprisingly wide variability of teacher perceptions with regard to the meaning of race.

The labels most frequently used by teachers were "white," "black," "mixed," "oriental," and "Puerto Rican." Their optional descriptive comments for these predominant labels were largely based on color and other physiognomic characteristics. Other labels, however, were based in order of frequency, upon nationality, language, religion, and location. No precise pattern or definition of race emerged.

Teachers' racial perceptions and school records' identification of pupils' photographs tended to largely agree (73% and 92%) for white and black pupils, but there was only a moderate level of agreement (25%) with regard to Hispanic pupils. Students classified as Hispanic on school records were labeled by teachers as white (37%) or a designation other than white, black, or Hispanic (32%) to a high degree. The lack of agreement for Hispanic pupils may be the product of applying rigid American, white-black norms to representatives of a more racially flexible culture. As Seda Bonilla (1958, p. 144) stated:

> In the area of racial identity, Americans assume as legitimate grounds for claims of white social status, the absence of Negro "blood," i.e., "pure" white ancestry; however, Latin Americans assume physical appearance as the main criterion [and] the legitimacy of racial identities intermediate to those of white and Negro . . . .

On the two unobtrusive measures, the piles and circles position tasks, teachers seemed to accord white students a significantly more positive status than their Hispanic peers. The results of the two measures varied, however, with respect to the valence position accorded to black students relative to

their white and Hispanic counterparts and also with respect to the significance of the teacher ethnicity and interaction factors. In the piles task, black students were positioned positively alongside white students, whereas, in the circles task they were accorded a negative valence identical to their Hispanic classmates. Teacher ethnicity and the interaction effect were significant factors in the circles task, but not in the piles task. This variance in results may be attributable to the imprecise nature of the measures and the preliminary extent of their use. However, in contrast to other unobtrusive attempts (e.g., Aron et al. 1976), a significant degree of pro-white and anti-Hispanic prejudice on the part of teachers surfaced in this study.

None of the demographic data compiled for the teachers seemd to be significantly related to the number and valence of their racial classifications of pupils photographs. Thus, teachers tended to identify and evaluate pupil races similarly, regardless of their own age, sex, educational level, and ethnicity.

In accordance with Seda Bonilla's (1968, 1970) work, Hispanic teachers tended to include an intermediate array of physiognomically specific categories between white and black, whereas white and black teachers tended to identify additional categories based largely on nationality. As further evidence of this culture conflict, Hispanic teachers tended to use a wide variety of labels in their racial self-identification (e.g., white, Spanish-speaking, mulato, Spanish-American, mixed, Latin, intermediate, Puerto Rican) in contrast to the largely black-white self-classifications of their counterparts.

Given the practical significance of teachers' racial perceptions and the embryonic status of researchers' measurement techniques, the tentatively promising results of this study would seem to merit replication and further investigation.

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